



Walla Walla County VSP Work Group Dec.2019 Meeting Minutes

Date: December 10th, 2019 Time: 1:00 p.m.

Place: Conservation
District Conference Room

Board Members Present:

David Haire, CTUIR

Brian Burns, Tri-State Steelheaders

Jonathan Hellberg-Wilson, Ag. Community

Judith Johnson, Kooskooski Commons

Brian Maiden, Ag. Community

Robert Riley, Ag. Community

Advisory: Tom Schirm, WDFW

Guest: Leslie Michel, WA.Dept. of Ag

Absent: Mark Klicker and Jason Bulay

Also present: Renee Hadley, Joanna Cowles Cleveland, Lisa Stearns, Cat Garza, Audrey Ahmann of WWCCD

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Vice-Chair David Haire

Minutes: The Sept 2019 minutes were presented and reviewed. Riley moved and Hellberg-Wilson seconded to approve the minutes as presented, motion passed.

- 1. Change to Work Group:** Hadley reported that Jason Bulay of the Blue Mountain Land Trust will be moving at the end of the month and was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict.
- 2. Implementation:** Hadley reported meeting with County Commissioners. Lauren Prentice is now Director of Community Development. Outreach for VSP included October mini-sessions where over 70 participants learned of VSP and how it works. There will be an article sent to the WSU Extension office for inclusion in their newsletter. District staff have been actively pursuing grant funding to implement projects to meet Work Plan goals. Hadley noted that Columbia VSP includes cost share focused on promoting ag. viability while the Walla Walla plan is more focused on water quality. Hadley asked work group members about priorities for cost share. There was a suggestion that irrigators need cost share for efficiency projects like variable drives, meters, and screens. In response to a question about CREP, Cowles Cleveland said there are still new projects being done, though lower rental rates might affect this. For projects coming out of CREP, as a general rule the shrubs and trees are not being disturbed. Asked about water quality benefits, Cowles Cleveland stated that with only three years of monitoring, no valid conclusions can be drawn as there are so many variables. Data was not collected in 2019 as there was no funding, but the monitors are still in place and would require minimal effort to be brought back into service. The Work Group asked staff to develop and present to them a monitoring plan that includes locations, planned schedule, and a summary report on past data.
- 3. Projects:** There was discussion on potential projects to be developed. There is potential to develop springs or enhance a series of springs and wetlands along drainages. One is on a spring near a small wetland where a small number of cattle have access. Another involves several ponds that could be restored as a wetland. This second project was revealed to be under development with another agency. The landowners are pursuing several options at this

time. Hadley will follow-up with them and see if VSP participation is feasible. Hadley then asked members of the work group about projects they are implementing.

- a. **TSS:** Burns reported that TSS has been working on the concrete channel that is Mill Creek when it flows through Walla Walla. It is a passage issue during high flows when the water is moving too fast for too long of a stretch. Their primary method is adding roughened concrete to the channel to dissipate energy and create resting areas. Match has been provided by the Umatilla tribes. TSS also has the Bridge to Bridge project which is another long-term restoration project and includes removal of a dyke to reconnect the floodplain, adding large woody debris, etc.
- b. **Kooskooski:** Johnson reported work on Yellowhawk Creek doing water quality monitoring, riparian buffer restoration, and similar work along the Little Walla Walla. There is a nexus between VSP, the work on Yellowhawk, and those landowners. Hadley and Johnson will discuss further and bring details back to the group.
- c. **CTUIR:** Hair requested that we ask Ethan Green with CTUIR to report on progress at the next meeting. There is a lot of work being done.

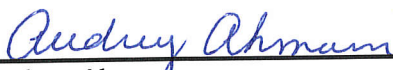
New Projects for review:


Project 1 and 2: Meter replacement. Stearns described the project site as a 240-acre farm with CREP. The landowner is looking to install a pivot to use water resources more effectively and needs two new meters. VSP is the only source currently available to help landowners meet the Work Plan goal of maintaining meters. Oosterhuis then presented a similar situation in that the project is a meter replacement and the landowner is seeking cost share to install a better meter when replacing a dysfunctional one. **Burns moved and Riley seconded to approve up to 8,000 for the first two meters and 2,700 for the second project, motion passed.** Members of the board expressed a concern that the total cost share available, which is currently set at 50,000¹, might end up being spent only on meter replacements. **Riley moved and Johnson seconded to allow up to 30% of the total VSP cost share budget for meters, and to revisit the need for more funds in March, motion passed.**


Public Comments: Leslie Michel spoke of WSDA's efforts to set a soil health baseline for soils in the state. The goal is to develop this for non-commodity crops in the state, and the work is being led by WSU. They need ag. producers to volunteer for soil testing, which would measure carbon, nitrogen, aggregate stability, microbial activity and organic matter in two fields for each participant. These would be the producer-identified best and worst field in his or her operation. Participants would get the test results for their fields.

With no further business on the agenda, the meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted


Audrey Ahmann
WWCCD


David Hair
Vice-Chairman



Next meeting: March 3rd, 2020 at 1:30

¹ The VSP funds are flexible and can be moved freely between budget items.